



Thursday, April 8, 2021

Chair Marvin Abney
House Finance Committee
Rhode Island State House
82 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: Testimony in Support of H-5683 and H-5672; Article 13, Section 5

Dear Chair Abney:

We write today in full support of House Bill 5683, House Bill 5672, and Budget Article 13 Section 5. This global pandemic has not only disrupted all of our lives, but also laid bare the many economic and societal challenges experienced by our state's most vulnerable people.

House Bill 5683, along with Budget Article 13 Section 5, would make important and necessary change to the Rhode Island Works Program. Specifically, it will increase the benefit, provide the yearly \$100 clothing allowance to infants and toddlers, allow a parent to attend CCRI for 2 years as their employment activity, and exclude earned income for 6 months when a parent starts a job.

We acknowledge and support the Governor and bill sponsors for including changes to RI Works that will help families. But of course, we want to emphasize the need to increase the monthly benefit for families (which has not been changed in over 30 years). This is the change that will have the largest impact on families, especially when it comes to moving children out of deep poverty. Adding babies and toddlers to the clothing allowance is beneficial because, as parents, we know \$100 does not begin to cover the winter coat, snow boots, underwear, pants, shirts, shows, etc. that a growing child needs over the course of the year (especially when sizes change often). Additionally, this piece of legislation will promote longer-term economic security for families and children.

House Bill 5672 is a vital piece of legislation needed to prevent a child care crisis in the state. The benefit that this bill would have for Rhode Island families is obvious. Families need access to affordable, high-quality child care so parents can work and their children can grow, learn, and thrive. However, high-quality child care can only be achieved by paying a living wage to the many child care workers, most of whom are women, in the state. As representatives of RI NOW, we find it important that this bill will also benefit women's welfare as well: both as parents/caregivers and child care workers. Numerous studies and articles have illustrated how detrimental the pandemic has been for women in the workforce. This bill affirms and enhances Rhode Island's commitment to equitable and accessible high-quality childcare for all Rhode Islanders.

Thank you for your consideration,

Hilary Levey Friedman, PhD
President, RI NOW

Victoria Picinich
Fundraising Co-Chair, RI NOW

Rhode Island National Organization for Women (RI NOW) is a membership-based advocacy organization with hundreds of members and supporters throughout the state of Rhode Island. We believe that anyone who identifies as a woman deserves equality and equity in political, social, and economic arenas.